

historic game in American history, and because of them, the boys and girls in Garfield Heights will come to know the joy of fielding a ground ball, hitting the winning run, teamwork, and winning and losing gracefully. The Garfield Heights Baseball League has given its youthful ballplayers much more than the love of the game—they've given generations of kids an understanding of life's lessons in the form of a baseball game, and they've created cherished childhood memories that last from the early innings of childhood, to the bottom of the ninth, two down, tie score, bases loaded. Batter up.

# ARTICLE ON REPRESENTATIVE MATSUI

## HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 23, 2002*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call your attention to the attached article on Rep. MATSUI featured in the Monday, July 22, 2002 edition of Roll Call entitled: Bob Matsui: the Democrats' Balancing Act.

Rep. MATSUI has been an outstanding and exemplary Member of the United States House of Representatives for 24 years. On the Ways and Means Committee, which I am privileged to serve as Ranking Democrat, Mr. MATSUI has been a stalwart protector of Social Security and a champion of expanding free and fair trade. It is with pleasure and pride that I ask that this article, which profiles his unwavering commitment and service to the committee, this august body, and the American people be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

### BOB MATSUI: THE DEMOCRATS' BALANCING ACT

(By Ben Pershing)

ROLL CALL—JULY 22, 2002 MONDAY

Try to get Rep. Robert Matsui (D-Calif.) to talk politics. You won't get very far.

After 24 years in Congress, he's no stranger to polls and tactics, and he's happy to explain why Democrats are better than Republicans. But he'd really rather talk about policy, which is why the current uproar over accounting practices and corporate governance suits him so well.

On an issue in which the politics are all about policy and reporters are writing breathless front-page stories about off-balance sheet partnerships, wonks can be weapons. And that's where Matsui comes in. As a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, Matsui, who currently serves as ranking member on the panel's subcommittee on Social Security, has had to spend the past several years playing defense. He's expended most of his energy trying to combat Republican proposals, with little opportunity to advance his own.

But as he sees it, the current climate gives Democrats a chance to attack. And he doesn't think there is much the GOP can do about it.

"To some extent—and this is my belief," Matsui said in an interview last week, "They are somewhat immobilized because they've received so much help from corporate America they really can't take them on in an effective way."

### AN OPPORTUNITY

Democrats have certainly received plenty of corporate contributions themselves and

have also played a role in blocking reforms in the past. But Matsui thinks charges that Republicans are in bed with big business fit neatly into a long-established Democratic storyline, meaning GOP efforts to fight back will fall on deaf ears.

"Just like the public knows that the Democrats are better on Social Security and Medicare and the Republicans have historically been better on defense, they know that Republicans are beholden to the business community," Matsui said. "Republicans can't change that, and for them to try to deny that would almost be counterintuitive."

Matsui is part of a group of more than two dozen senior Democratic lawmakers—dubbed the "extended leadership"—who meet in Minority Leader Richard Gephardt's (D-Mo.) office every day at 5 p.m. when the House is in session. Lately, "business-gate" has been a prime topic of discussion.

Democrats see the business scandals as a way to segue into their other top campaign issues—prescription drugs and, especially, Social Security. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee sends out daily press releases accusing GOP lawmakers of "breaking the trust," and now Democrats charge that Republican plans for Social Security reform will take money promised to seniors and give it to those same scheming Wall Street brokers.

When House and Senate Democrats held a press conference July 12 to hit the GOP on corporate issues, Matsui's contention that "Republicans have a secret plan to privatize Social Security" was CNN's sound bite of the night.

Aside from pointing out that much of the corporate malfeasance now being spotlighted happened during the Clinton administration, Republicans also hope that the Democrats may go too far and paint themselves as the anti-business party.

Matsui is not particularly worried about a backlash because he is 100 percent convinced of the efficacy of Democratic policies.

"I think the business community knows that the Democratic Party has been essentially responsible for the growth in the economy in the last 50 years," Matsui said, echoing the common Democratic refrain that the current economic downturn coincided with the Republicans moving back into the White House.

### MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Democrats believe it makes sense to deploy Matsui on the corporate scandals because he is seen as a relative voice of reason on the Ways and Means minority roster.

"He doesn't have a long list of sort of knee-jerk, anti-business stuff," said a senior Gephardt aide, arguing that Matsui's relatively moderate record on economic issues lends him added credibility.

Matsui is by no means the only—or even the most prominent—member of Ways and Means to focus on this topic. With Gephardt and ranking member Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.) coordinating, committee Democrats such as Reps. Richard Neal (Mass.), Sander Levin (Mich.), Jim McDermott (Wash.) and Lloyd Doggett (Texas) have all carved out their niches.

Matsui's specialties are Social Security and trade, though he is comfortable with just about everything in Ways and Means' broad portfolio.

"He knows the subject well, but he also knows how to place it in a larger context," said Levin. "He knows the forest and the trees."

In terms of style, Matsui sits on the Ways and Means median. He gets less attention than Rangel, the party's political standard-bearer on the panel, and he is not as liberal

as Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.), who is just ahead of Matsui and behind Rangel on the seniority list. But Matsui is also less inclined to cut deals with the GOP than someone like Rep. Benjamin Cardin (D-Md.).

"You look at those three, he always seems to play the middle," an aide to a GOP Ways and Means member said of Matsui vis-a-vis Rangel and Stark. "You always have Matsui trying to sound like the voice of reason among those three."

But the aide cautioned that, while Matsui is pragmatic and relatively easy for Republicans to deal with, "don't let that fool you, He's very partisan."

"There's something in between being low-key and being a table thumper," suggested Levin. "He's in the middle."

Matsui's most prominent policy role in the past several years has been on trade promotion authority, also known as fast-track. An avowed free-trader, Matsui whipped his fellow Democrats to support fast-track in 1993 and 1997, and he backed permanent normal trade relations with China in 2000.

But Matsui doesn't support the current version of trade promotion authority, arguing that it may give the World Trade Organization the power to undermine American domestic laws. The bill passed the House last December by just one vote, with only 21 Democrats voting in favor.

Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) worked very closely with Matsui on trade issues in the past when the two lawmakers were on the same side of the fight. But Matsui's more recent stances on trade bills have meant that, on a professional level, "that relationship has become somewhat strained," said Kolbe, hastening to add that he still likes and respects Matsui personally.

"We miss him a lot on the trade issues. I wish we could get him back."

### AMBITION

With 12 terms in the House under his belt and a decent record of achievement, the 60-year-old Matsui could look to expand his horizons.

But, having been in the minority now for eight years, Matsui doesn't aspire to elected leadership and says his biggest goal is simply to become chairman of the Ways and Means subcommittee on Social Security.

Matsui is loyal to Rangel and won't even entertain a question about whether he would like to become Ways and Means' leading Democrat if the New Yorker leaves the House before he does (and there's no indication that Rangel is going anywhere in the near future).

Yet it's hard to imagine that Matsui wouldn't want the job given his love for the committee's work. And with Stark's well-documented history of outlandish remarks and unpredictable behavior, it appears unlikely that Democrats would ever hand him the top job on a major committee.

"I don't think there's any question that if Rangel leaves Matsui is the natural next candidate" to run Ways and Means, said a senior Democratic leadership aide.

On the political front, Matsui has toyed with running for governor or the Senate in the past, but he points out now that the best way to run statewide in California is to shoot first for a position such as lieutenant governor, a job that he sees as far less attractive than his current post in the House.

Matsui also did stints as treasurer and deputy chairman of the Democratic National Committee in the '90s, and his wife, Doris, worked in the Clinton White House. But he'd still rather focus on substance.

"I enjoy the mechanics. When we had the trade issues and I was whipping it on behalf of the Clinton administration, I enjoyed that," he recalled. "On the other hand, I really enjoy policy. It is my strength."